

THE LEARNING CIRCLE:
SEEING SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGH
MARK 1:14-15



CONNECT

When you were a kid, what did you think you would be when you grew up? Did things turn out the way you thought?

WORD

Mark 1:14-15 (ESV) - ¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

WHAT

What does the Bible say?

Have you ever had a plan for how your day would go and then suddenly one thing happens that changes everything? All your plans are derailed in a single moment. Did you find that frustrating? Did it seem more like an obstacle or an opportunity?

In this passage, Jesus is launching his ministry. He has just been baptized by John and has spent forty days in the wilderness fasting and praying to prepare himself. He enters the city of Galilee and proclaims his mission. He calls a group of men to follow him and tells them what they will need to do to be a part of his kingdom. They must repent and believe.

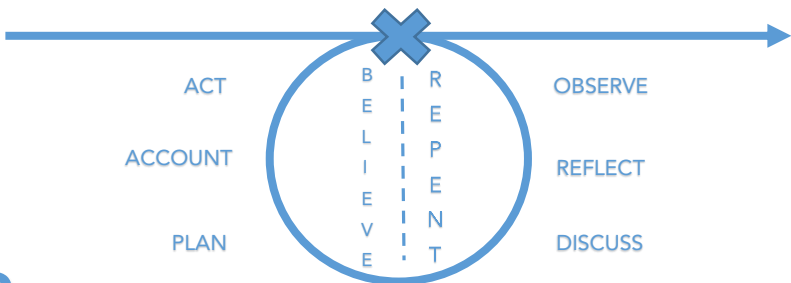
The disciples did not see Jesus invitation to them as an obstacle to completing their goals. They saw it as an opportunity to do something greater with their lives.

God provides events like this to give us opportunities. They are moments when the potential exists for everything to change. He brings them at the right time and in the right place so that he can gather the loose ends of our lives together in his hands and bring us into greater intimacy with him.

These moments might be positive or negative. They might be as wonderful as getting married or becoming a parent or they might be painful and tragic like losing a job or the death of a loved one.

Sometimes they are much simpler moments like hearing a child laugh or arguing with a coworker. Often they come when we are reading the scripture and a passage that we have read many times suddenly seems brand new and touches us in a way that it never has before.

Regardless of the form these moments take, we are called to respond in the same way. We are called to repent and believe.



Repentance in these moments requires us to **observe** where we are then to **reflect** on our condition. We need to ask ourselves why we are reacting in the way that we are. Then if our repentance is to produce a lasting change we must invite others into the process. We must **discuss** these moments with people that we trust.

But just recognizing what God is showing us is not enough. We can't just agree with God, we must do something about it. We must believe, and, if our belief is to have and meaning at all, we must do something about it. We have to make a **plan**. Then we must ask those that we trust to hold us to **account** for fulfilling that plan. Finally, we must **act** on what God is teaching us.

SO WHAT

What is the relevance to my life?

- What really stood out to you in today's message and lesson? What would you like to discuss further with the group?
- Jesus called people to follow him, calling them disciples or literally "learners." Have you had moments in your life when God has taken steps to teach you something important? Did you view these moments as obstacles or opportunities?
- Often when we repent, we leave out the discussion step. Why do you think it is so important for us to discuss what God is revealing to us with others? Why do you think that we find this step so difficult?
- What kind of qualities should we look for in a discussion partner?

- Have you ever made a plan to do something to deepen your relationship with God? Did you find it difficult to follow through? How would having someone hold you accountable improve your chances of success?
- What is the most effective way to hold someone accountable? What accountability techniques would work best for you?

NOW WHAT How do I apply the word to my life?

- God presents us with learning moments in a particular time and a particular place so that they will be effective in changing our lives. What is God trying to teach you right now?
- Who do you know that can discuss these learning moments with you? Who can you ask to hold you accountable for the plans that you make?
- Who do you know that you can share the learning circle with? How would you go about sharing it?
- How will the learning circle change the way you view interruptions in your plans and routines this week? How can you remind yourself that obstacles are very often opportunities for God to teach us something important?
- How can we help you? How can we hold you accountable? Please share how we can pray for you and support you with love.